Leading in the science of risk

24 November 2011 - One of the Met Office's leading scientists has today won a prestigious award for research which has shed new light on how climate change could influence extreme weather over Europe.

Dr Adam Scaife has won the Climate Change category of the Lloyd's Science of Risk prize , which recognises leading research that could have a big impact on risk management.

Lloyd's judges described Adam's work as demonstrating "a paradigm shift in our understanding of the risk of climate change".

It shows that future changes in the jet stream and storms are likely to be different from previous estimates. Heavy rainfall, for example, could be twice as frequent over large parts of Europe as had previously been predicted by some climate models.

Adam said: "We found that by including more levels of the atmosphere in our climate models a whole new mechanism comes in to play which is really important for regional predictions."

The research, which included input from other international research groups, could have a big effect on the finance and insurance industries as flooding and storms cause billions of pounds of damage each year in Europe alone.

These predictions are also crucial in underpinning estimates of water availability and the capacity for wind energy - giving it even wider implications for risk management.

Richard Ward, Chief Executive of Lloyd's said: "Yet again, the entrants into the Science of Risk prize have provided fascinating and thought provoking insights to a range of issues of importance to the insurance industry. The record catastrophe losses facing the industry this year are a reminder of the importance of understanding risk."

Adam's success follows on from another Met Office scientist, Dr Doug Smith, who last year won the Natural Hazard category and the overall prize for research on long range hurricane prediction.

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Last updated: 25 November 2011